

Integration of Ukrainian women refugees into the education sector in Poland

Nataliia Dobroier

Dr in Cultural Studies, Associate Professor, Odesa Polytechnic National University, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9712-9219>

Introduction

The adaptation of Ukrainian women refugees into Poland's educational sector is a pressing and significant issue that touches upon not only the humanitarian dimensions of the crisis but also the challenges of professional integration and mutually beneficial cooperation. The large-scale displacement caused by the war in Ukraine has forced many highly qualified women with substantial teaching experience to start their lives anew in a foreign country. At the same time, the Polish educational system, grappling with staff shortages and the need to support refugee children, has shown interest in integrating Ukrainian professionals.

The relevance of this topic stems from the scale of the migration crisis, which significantly impacts the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of host countries. In Poland, which hosts a substantial number of refugees, the successful professional adaptation of Ukrainian women becomes a critical factor not only for their self-realization but also for ensuring the sustainability of the local educational system.

The novelty of this study lies in its analysis of the specific challenges and opportunities faced by Ukrainian women as they integrate into Poland's educational system. The research examines both formal and informal aspects of this process, including the

recognition of qualifications, mastering the Polish language, overcoming cultural barriers, and establishing professional networks.

The purpose of this article is to explore the pathways through which Ukrainian women refugees integrate into Poland's educational sector, identify the main obstacles they encounter, and propose potential solutions to support their professional development and socio-cultural adaptation.

Thus, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex processes of migrant integration and highlights the importance of strategies aimed at leveraging the potential of skilled professionals to strengthen the educational system during times of crisis.

Research hypothesis and questions

This study is guided by the hypothesis that comprehensive integration programs, including language training, professional retraining, and diploma recognition, significantly enhance the successful adaptation of Ukrainian refugee women into the Polish education sector. The main research questions include:

- What are the primary barriers to professional integration for Ukrainian refugee women in Poland's education sector?
- How do language proficiency and qualification recognition impact their employment opportunities?
- What strategies and policies are most effective in facilitating the integration of Ukrainian refugee women into the Polish labor market?

Methodology and data

This study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on a survey conducted among Ukrainian refugee women pursuing postgraduate education at the Warsaw Higher School of Pedagogical Sciences (Pol.: Wyższa Szkoła Nauk Pedagogicznych, WSNP)¹. The sample consists of 52 respondents, representing 26.8% of the total enrolled students. The survey captures socio-demographic characteristics, professional background, integration experiences, and employment challenges. Additionally, secondary data from reports, policy documents, and academic studies are analyzed to provide a broader understanding of systemic barriers and support mechanisms.

¹ N. Dobroier, Survey for the study "Integration of Ukrainian women refugees into the education sector in Poland", <https://forms.gle/A5XDNRSkYSZ9pMzy6> [in Ukrainian].

Literature review

The integration of Ukrainian women refugees into Poland's education sector presents both challenges and opportunities, reflecting broader dynamics of migration and adaptation. To understand the complexities of this process, it is essential to examine existing research on the roles of women in education, migration, and professional integration.

Women in education

In the article *The role of women in education – responsibility of educated women* by Elizabeth A. Greenleaf, the author highlights that educated women bear a particular responsibility for improving the educational system. Greenleaf emphasizes that women should actively participate in managing educational institutions and advocate for equal opportunities in the professional environment². This becomes especially important in addressing systemic discrimination, such as pay gaps or the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions.

Greenleaf argues that educated women, by inspiring others, contribute not only to the improvement of the educational system but also to the personal development and self-determination of their students³.

Contemporary research confirms that women play a pivotal role in developing inclusive and innovative approaches in education. The article *Role of women as educators & how they're making a difference by leading the way* highlights that female teachers and administrators are increasingly becoming leaders in integrating technology and designing programs that emphasize both cognitive and emotional development in students. Their approaches contribute to creating more flexible educational systems, tailored to address modern challenges, including cultural diversity and globalization⁴.

Migrant and refugee women

In the work *Gender and Migration* it is emphasized that women constitute a significant proportion of the migration flow, often shouldering dual responsibilities: professional and familial. They are more likely to face risks such as exploitation, discrimination, and limited access to resources. Women's unique role in migration lies in their simultaneous participation in economic processes and their position as one of the

² E.A. Greenleaf, *The role of women in education – responsibility of educated women*, "Educational Horizons" 1973, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 77–81, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42925756> [accessed: 1.11.2024].

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Role of women as educators & how they're making a difference by leading the way*, Girls.buzz, <https://girls.buzz/blogs/role-of-women-as-educators> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

most vulnerable social groups. At the same time, women significantly contribute to the economies of host countries, particularly in sectors such as healthcare, education, and social services⁵.

The chapter *Beyond Numbers: Gender Dimensions Throughout Migration Cycle* from the *World Migration Report 2024* explores the impact of the migration cycle on women. Special attention is given to the barriers they face in having their professional qualifications, earned in their countries of origin, recognized in host countries. Additionally, it highlights the underrepresentation of migrant women in professional training programs, which limits their opportunities in the labor market⁶.

According to materials from UN Women presented in the guide *Gender on the Move: Working on the migration-development nexus*, refugee women encounter heightened threats during migration. Key challenges include the lack of support networks, language barriers, and discrimination in employment. At the same time, the guide emphasizes that migrant women can play a vital role in the sustainable development of host communities, provided there is systematic support for their labor integration⁷.

In the article *Highly Educated Women: Exploring Barriers and Strategies for Labour Integration in an Emotional Migratory Process*, the authors analyze the barriers and strategies for highly educated migrant women integrating into the labor market. They emphasize challenges such as language barriers, lack of personal networks, traditional gender roles, and recognition of qualifications⁸. Although the study is based on the experience of women in Spain, these issues are also relevant for Ukrainian refugee women seeking to integrate into the Polish labor market. At the same time, successful adaptation is shown to be facilitated by mentorship programs, retraining courses, language training, and flexible forms of employment.

The blog *Women and Migration* discusses the necessity of integrating gender analysis into migrant support programs. It emphasizes that gender-sensitive approaches help address the unique needs of migrant women, including psychological support

⁵ *Gender and Migration*, Migration Data Portal, <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/gender-and-migration> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

⁶ *Beyond Numbers: Gender Dimensions Throughout Migration Cycle*, [in:] *World Migration Report 2024*, Chapter 6: *Gender and Migration: Trends, Gaps and Urgent Action*, International Organization for Migration, <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-6/beyond-numbers-gender-dimensions-throughout-migration-cycle> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

⁷ *Gender on the Move: Working on the migration-development nexus from a gender perspective*, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), 2013, <https://eca.unwomen.org/ru/digital-library/publications/2013/11/gender-on-the-move-working-on-the-migration> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

⁸ C. Maiztegui Oñate, M.L. Di Martino, I. Aristegui, *Highly Educated Women: Exploring Barriers and Strategies for Labour Integration in an Emotional Migratory Process*, "Social Sciences" 2023, vol. 12, no. 12: 687, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12120687> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

and the development of professional skills. Such programs are particularly crucial for ensuring the long-term integration of women into host societies⁹.

Migrant and refugee women face numerous barriers to professional adaptation. Issues such as discrimination, qualification recognition, and limited access to resources require systemic solutions. However, by incorporating gender-specific aspects into migration strategies, it is possible to design effective support programs that facilitate the integration of women into professional and social environments.

Refugee women in Poland: challenges and integration prospects

Poland, hosting a significant number of Ukrainian refugees, has become the subject of active research on migration. Recent studies analyze a wide range of issues, including socio-cultural adaptation, employment, access to education, and support for vulnerable groups, particularly women. One of the central research areas is the educational sector, where the skills and experience of migrants can be used for their professional and social integration. Initiatives aimed at supporting refugee women focus on creating inclusive programs and sustainable adaptation mechanisms.

According to data, 65% of Ukrainian refugees are employed in Poland, yet women face numerous challenges in the labor market. Among the main problems are the lack of recognition of qualifications, low language proficiency, and limited access to high-paying jobs. The study *Social and cultural adaptation of Ukrainian refugees in Poland: the culture of everyday life* notes that many refugee women are forced to work in low-skilled sectors, which reduces their chances for long-term career integration¹⁰. In this context, educational initiatives and programs aimed at improving their competitiveness and social adaptation are of great importance. UNICEF in Poland implements programs designed to support Ukrainian children and women, emphasizing the importance of educational opportunities as a key element of integration. These programs provide access to language courses, further education, and mentoring initiatives, which help women adapt to the new environment and enhance their competitiveness in the labor market¹¹.

The BSI_4Women Project supports refugee women in Poland by providing opportunities for them to participate in educational and professional programs¹². These

⁹ *Women and Migration*, Policy Studies Blog, University of Bristol, 16.11.2023, <https://policystudies.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/2023/11/16/woman-and-migration/> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

¹⁰ N. Dobroier, *Social and cultural adaptation of Ukrainian refugees in Poland: the culture of everyday life*, „Kultura – Historia – Globalizacja” 2023, no. 29, pp. 93–105, https://www.academia.edu/108786869/Social_and_cultural_adaptation_of_Ukrainian_refugees_in_Poland_the_culture_of_everyday_life [accessed: 12.12.2024].

¹¹ *UNICEF Refugee Response Office in Poland*, UNICEF Poland, <https://www.unicef.org/eca/poland> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

¹² *BSI_4Women Project*, Interreg Baltic Sea Region, https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/bsi_4women/ [accessed: 14.12.2024].

initiatives create conditions for the development of support networks aimed at empowering women and enhancing their role in the host society¹³. The Lutheran World Federation emphasizes the importance of psychological support for refugee women. The programs focus on combating emotional vulnerability and burnout, which often accompany the adaptation process¹⁴. Additionally, the HIAS initiative provides refugee women with access to professional retraining courses and counseling services, which contribute to their integration into Poland's economic and social life¹⁵.

In the context of these challenges, it is important to highlight studies focused on identifying structural issues and proposing solutions for the successful adaptation of refugees in Polish society. The SWPS study *Uchodźczynie z Ukrainy: Superbohaterki mimo wszystko* [Ukrainian refugees: Superheroines despite everything] emphasizes that Ukrainian refugee women demonstrate incredible resilience despite numerous difficulties. The work is based on surveys and interviews, documenting their efforts to balance family care with integration into Polish society and the labor market¹⁶. Garbolińska's publication *Etyka badań w ośrodkach dla osób w procedurze uchodźczej* [Research ethics in centers for people undergoing the refugee procedure] examines the ethical aspects of research conducted in migrant centers, focusing on methodologies that help avoid stigmatization and take into account the unique circumstances of refugees' lives¹⁷.

The article *Blisko połowa Ukrainek, które uciekły przed wojną, chce zostać* [Nearly half of Ukrainian women who fled the war want to stay] explores the motivations of Ukrainian women who wish to stay in Poland. About half of the refugees plan to start a new life in the country, despite economic and social obstacles. This study provides insight into the long-term plans of refugee women and their desire to integrate into Polish society¹⁸.

At the same time, journalistic works highlight the contextual and structural aspects of migration, not always focusing on research. The article *Czarni imigranci*

¹³ *The Resilient Spirit of Ukrainian Refugee Women in Poland*, Interreg Baltic Sea Region 13.03.2024, https://interreg-baltic.eu/project-posts/bsi_4women/refugee-women-in-poland/ [accessed: 16.12.2024].

¹⁴ *Poland: Supporting women refugees*, The Lutheran World Federation, 5.01.2023, <https://lutheranworld.org/news/poland-supporting-women-refugees> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

¹⁵ *Fresh Start for Women Refugees in Poland*, HIAS, 6.03.2024, <https://hias.org/news/fresh-start-women-refugees-poland/> [accessed: 24.11.2024].

¹⁶ *Uchodźczynie z Ukrainy: Superbohaterki mimo wszystko*, SWPS University, <https://swps.pl/centrum-prasowe/informacje-prasowe/34824-uchodzczynie-z-ukrainy-superbohaterki-mimo-wszystko> [accessed: 10.12.2024].

¹⁷ A. Garbolińska, *Etyka badań w ośrodkach dla osób w procedurze uchodźczej*, <https://www.bbng.org/etyka-badan-w-osrodkach> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

¹⁸ *Blisko połowa Ukrainek, które uciekły przed wojną, chce zostać*, RP.pl, <https://www.rp.pl/spoleczenstwo/art39857061-blisko-polowa-ukrainek-ktore-uciekly-przed-wojna-do-polski-chce-tuzostac> [accessed: 12.12.2024].

i białe uchodźczynie: O polskiej hipokryzji [Black immigrants and white refugees: on Polish hypocrisy] discusses the double standards of Polish society toward migrants. The author criticizes the system for discrimination and emphasizes the need to consider the diversity of migration processes, especially regarding women from different cultural and ethnic groups¹⁹. The publication from BBNG.org on the ethics of research in refugee centers is also a journalistic article, highlighting the importance of a proper approach to studying refugee women and avoiding their objectification²⁰.

As can be seen from this literature review, migrant and refugee women face several specific challenges, such as discrimination, language barriers, and the lack of recognition for their professional qualifications. Nevertheless, research emphasizes that women have significant potential for successful integration, especially when their work aligns with their prior qualifications.

Of particular interest is the connection between the integration process and the education system, as education not only facilitates professional adaptation but also plays a crucial role in social and cultural integration. However, this topic remains insufficiently explored in existing studies. My research, focused on the integration of Ukrainian refugee women into the Polish education system, will complement and expand upon the issues raised, providing a deeper understanding of their experiences, challenges, and opportunities. This will help not only to identify key barriers to integration but also to propose effective approaches and practices that can foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Integration of Ukrainian refugee women into the Polish education system

Recent studies emphasize the uniqueness of the situation faced by Ukrainian refugee women, who, on the one hand, have high levels of professional qualifications, but on the other hand, encounter difficulties such as language barriers, lack of recognition of qualifications, and social isolation. Research confirms the significance of this issue for Polish society, noting the shortage of staff in the education sector, which could be partially addressed through the integration of refugees.

In recent months, Polish schools have become a significant place of integration for Ukrainian refugees, especially for women with teaching experience. However, despite the high professional qualifications of many Ukrainian teachers, women face a number of barriers related to labor migration, recognition of qualifications, and social isolation. Articles and studies dedicated to this issue highlight the uniqueness of the situation of refugee women working in the Polish education system.

¹⁹ *Czarni imigranci i białe uchodźczynie: O polskiej hipokryzji*, Magazyn Kontakt, <https://magazyn-kontakt.pl/czarni-imigranci-i-biale-uchodzyczynie-o-polskiej-hipokryzji> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

²⁰ A. Garbolińska, *op. cit.*

According to the article *500 ukraińskich nauczycielek uczy w polskich szkołach. Jak NGO wspierają system edukacji?* [500 Ukrainian teachers teach in Polish schools. How do NGOs support the education system?], there is a shortage of teachers in Poland, which creates opportunities for Ukrainian educators. However, there are numerous challenges faced by refugee women, including the language barrier and the difficulty in recognizing qualifications. Many of them hold diplomas obtained in Ukraine, but in Poland, their qualifications are not always recognized, which forces teachers to work in lower positions that do not match their experience²¹.

Olga Gembik in her article thoroughly examines how Ukrainian women who worked as educators in their home country are rebuilding their careers in Poland. These women face the challenge of adapting to new educational standards and systems, which requires significant effort. Issues with language courses, as well as the lack of clear and transparent procedures for recognizing qualifications, create additional difficulties. Nevertheless, many women begin to work in Polish schools, which is an important step toward their social integration²².

Against the backdrop of these challenges, Polish authorities and educational organizations have launched active initiatives to support Ukrainian teachers. The article *Dość pracy w fabryce. Ukraińskie nauczycielki powinny pracować w szkołach. Projekt, który to zmieni* [No more factory work. Ukrainian teachers should work in schools. A project that will change that] discusses the plans of the Polish Ministry of Education aimed at improving the situation of Ukrainian educators, such as the creation of Polish language courses and retraining programs for teachers²³.

In addition, the Portal Oświatowy platform notes that for the successful integration of Ukrainian teachers into the Polish system, programs are needed that effectively recognize their qualifications. Working in Polish schools can become an important element of the social and professional adaptation of refugee women²⁴.

There are also private initiatives aimed at supporting refugee women working in the education sector. For example, in the BSI_4Women project, opportunities are created for women working in the education system to participate in professional

²¹ *500 ukraińskich nauczycielek uczy w polskich szkołach. Jak NGO wspierają system edukacji?*, OKO.press, <https://oko.press/ukraińskie-nauczycielki-w-polskich-szkolach-edukacja> [accessed: 14.12.2024].

²² O. Gembik, *Jak ukraińskie nauczycielki odbudowują swoje kariery w Polsce*, Sestry.eu, <https://www.sestry.eu/pl/artykuly/jak-ukraińskie-nauczycielki-odbudowuja-swoje-kariery-w-polsce> [accessed: 26.11.2024].

²³ *Dość pracy w fabryce. Ukraińskie nauczycielki powinny pracować w szkołach. Projekt, który to zmieni*, OKO.press, <https://oko.press/ukraińskie-nauczycielki-powinny-pracowac-w-szkolach> [accessed: 8.11.2024].

²⁴ A. Król, *Kwalifikacje i awans zawodowy nauczyciela z Ukrainy*, Portal Oświatowy, <https://www.portaloswiatowy.pl/przygotowanie-do-zawodu/kwalifikacje-i-awans-zawodowy-nauczyciela-z-ukrainy-23731.html> [accessed: 5.12.2024].

retraining programs and improve their skills so that they can meet the requirements of the Polish education sector²⁵.

Thus, despite certain challenges, Ukrainian women working in Polish schools make an important contribution to the educational process. However, for full professional adaptation and overcoming barriers, it is necessary to continue working on improving the recognition of qualifications, developing educational programs, and providing language support. These measures will not only improve the quality of education in Poland but also contribute to the social integration of refugee women into Polish society.

Thus, the issue of integrating refugee women into the Polish education sector lies at the intersection of several academic fields, including gender studies, migration policy, and educational reforms. However, this topic requires further in-depth analysis to identify the most effective strategies for overcoming barriers and utilizing the potential of migrant women in the new professional environment.

Recently, there has been a growing trend towards more active involvement of refugee women in the processes of qualification recognition and obtaining postgraduate education. This activity is strategically important for their integration, as it allows them to return to their familiar professional roles, strengthens their social and professional identity, and helps them adapt to the cultural context of Polish society. Furthermore, there is an increasing demand for teachers, speech therapists, psychologists, and other specialists in Polish schools who can effectively work in an intercultural environment, making these women highly sought after.

State and non-state institutions actively support this process through financial and legal programs. In particular, there are initiatives that facilitate the recognition of diplomas, as well as funding for postgraduate education. These programs play a crucial role in creating conditions for the professional integration of Ukrainian refugee women into Polish society. They not only help ensure the adaptation of these women but also contribute to the development of the Polish education sector by attracting highly qualified specialists.

Thus, the integration of Ukrainian refugee women into the Polish education sector is a multidimensional process that encompasses both the individual efforts of women and institutional support. Analyzing this process allows for a deeper understanding of how educational and professional strategies contribute to social adaptation and integration in the face of global migration challenges.

Despite significant support for refugee women entering or wishing to enter the Polish education system, their path to integration is not without certain challenges. Specifically, within the framework of my research among women who chose the path of postgraduate education, a series of issues requiring further attention were identified.

²⁵ BSI_4Women Project, *op. cit.*

To better understand their difficulties, a study was conducted among students who began their studies at the Warsaw Higher School of Pedagogical Sciences (WSNP).

Of the 194 enrolled students, 52 respondents participated in the survey, which represents approximately 26.8% of the total sample. Although the sample size does not reach half of the total number of students, the data obtained are representative. The homogeneity of the respondents' answers and the consistency of key trends allow for the identification of the main difficulties faced by refugee women in their academic and professional integration into the Polish educational context.

Thus, the study provides an opportunity to identify problem areas, despite all the existing support programs for refugee women.

The study is qualitative in nature, as it focuses on an in-depth analysis of a specific group of refugee women who have enrolled in postgraduate education. The survey allows for the exploration of the participants' subjective experiences, identifying the main problems and difficulties these women face in the process of adapting to Poland's educational system.

The data obtained allowed for an understanding of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, their educational and professional background, as well as the circumstances that influence their adaptation to the new cultural and professional environment. Special attention was given to how their professional competencies align with new life realities, as well as how having children and family responsibilities impact their choices and opportunities.

This approach allowed for the creation of a multifaceted portrait of the participants and the identification of key factors that determine their process of integration into Poland's educational sector.

The women who participated in the study represent different age categories, but the majority (84%) are in the middle age range (36–55 years). This suggests that this group is the most active in trying to adapt and integrate into the new society through education.

It is worth noting that 100% of the respondents have children (85% have more than one), which is an important factor shaping their motivations: women strive for professional fulfillment not only for themselves but also to ensure the well-being of their families. The age of the children, ranging from 1 to 19 years old, indicates multigenerational families.

93% of the respondents have higher education, with 7% having obtained postgraduate or doctoral degrees. This figure significantly exceeds the average level of higher education among the Ukrainian population, indicating that the educational-qualification sample is representative of the intellectual elite.

The professional specialization of the respondents covers a wide range of humanities and natural sciences disciplines. Among the surveyed women, the following fields stand out:

- Scientific activity: masters and PhD candidates with extensive knowledge in their fields.
- Education and pedagogy: school subject teachers, lecturers, educators.
- Practical activity: speech therapists, psychologists with practical experience working with various age and social groups.
- Administration: educational institution leaders with significant management experience.

This wide range of professional specialization highlights the deep involvement of women in the educational field, which is a characteristic feature of Ukrainian culture, where education has traditionally been perceived as a prestigious and socially significant profession for women.

The vast majority of respondents (90%) have work experience in the educational field, with more than half (57%) having worked in their field for over 10 years. This indicates the presence of significant social capital, including knowledge, skills, and professional connections. These resources not only contribute to their professional adaptation but can also be effectively used in the new country's context.

It is interesting to note that 10% of respondents, who previously did not work in their specialty, see their education as a key factor for adaptation in Poland. This indicates their willingness to use their existing knowledge and skills to integrate into the professional environment of the new country.

The marital status of respondents is also an important aspect of their social profile. The majority (60%) are married, which reflects traditional family values. At the same time, 30% are divorced women and 7% are in civil unions, demonstrating the diversity of family models characteristic of modern social transformations.

This diversity not only reflects a shift in social norms but also the adaptability of women to new circumstances, where balancing professional activity and personal responsibilities becomes a key challenge. The results emphasize that despite different life circumstances, all respondents have a high level of motivation for professional fulfillment, which contributes to their successful integration into the educational sector in Poland.

Thus, the data obtained indicate the significant potential of Ukrainian refugee women for successful integration into the new society, with their social capital and professional experience being key resources in this process.

The war in Ukraine became a powerful factor of forced mobility, fundamentally changing the life strategies of many women. For the majority of respondents working in education or science, maintaining their professional identity became their main goal. They sought to adapt to the new conditions while preserving their competencies and social status.

An analysis of responses to the question “What areas of activity did you have to master in Poland?” shows the multifaceted challenges faced by Ukrainian refugee women. Although 87% of respondents were able to find work in the educational field, their journey was much more complicated than it may seem at first glance.

Most women were unable to immediately realize themselves in the educational field. Forced circumstances led them to temporarily work in other sectors:

- Temporary work (44%): The most common types of activities included cleaning, childcare, and other similar jobs.
- Manufacturing (17%) and services (14%): These sectors became a forced choice for many to ensure a minimal income.

This experience indicates significant challenges faced by women, even those with a high level of education.

Financial instability

Even those who managed to find work in the educational sector often had to seek additional sources of income due to the low wages. This is confirmed by the following data:

- Temporary work (44%) continued to be performed by women already employed in the educational sector.
- Additional work in caregiving (20%) and retail (10%) was common among respondents to ensure financial stability.

Many women had to combine several types of work:

- Work in education was often supplemented by temporary jobs.
- Gradual integration into the education sector occurred only after the recognition of qualifications or upgrading skills.

Language barriers and the need to validate diplomas created additional obstacles. Many women started with jobs that did not match their specialization, and only later, through efforts in diploma recognition, acquiring further education, or improving language skills, were they able to return to their profession.

The experience of Ukrainian refugee women demonstrates their adaptability and readiness to work in various conditions for financial stability and professional realization. Their integration into the Polish education system is complex and often requires combining temporary jobs with professional activities. These challenges highlight the need for additional support programs, such as simplifying the diploma recognition process, developing language courses, and ensuring decent working conditions in the education sector.

The gradual adaptation of Ukrainian women to new conditions is not only a testament to their resilience but also an indicator that proper support can accelerate integration and contribute to the preservation of their social and professional capital.

Analysis of respondents' answers to the question "Did you face the problem of working outside your profession?" revealed a key pattern: almost 100% of the respondents indicated that finding low-paid work that does not require knowledge of Polish is relatively easy. Around 87% of respondents reported having experience in such work.

This indicates the existence of broad opportunities for employment in low-skilled sectors, which provide a basic income but do not require significant preparation or integration. Such jobs often become the first steps for refugee women adapting to a new environment. However, the experience of the respondents also shows that:

1. Language proficiency is a critical factor for further professional growth. The respondents note that improving their knowledge of the Polish language significantly expands their opportunities to secure higher-paying positions. This highlights the need for the development of language programs that can facilitate the faster integration of women into the local professional environment.
2. The recognition of professional qualifications opens up opportunities for working in their field or in related areas. Respondents highlighted that the process of diploma recognition is lengthy, but its successful completion allows them to apply for skilled jobs that are closer to their previous professional experience.

These data show that Ukrainian refugee women often use low-skilled work as a transitional stage to secure basic financial stability. At the same time, they actively work on improving their language skills and completing the diploma recognition process in order to return to jobs that match their professional level.

Successful integration of Ukrainian refugee women into the Polish education sector is possible due to their high level of professional training and significant social capital. However, this process is complicated by factors such as the language barrier, the need for diploma recognition, labor market restrictions for foreigners, and the limited availability of specialized support programs.

Ukrainian refugee women often use low-skilled work as a transitional phase to ensure basic financial stability, while simultaneously developing language skills and validating their qualifications. Support programs that combine language training, professional orientation, and assistance with the diploma recognition process are crucial for accelerating their adaptation and returning to professional work in the education sector.

Therefore, providing targeted state and public support can not only help refugees integrate into Polish society but also strengthen Poland's education system by involving experienced specialists from Ukraine.

Conclusions

The findings of this study strongly support the hypothesis that comprehensive integration programs, including language training, professional retraining, and diploma recognition, significantly enhance the successful adaptation of Ukrainian refugee women into the Polish education sector. The analysis demonstrates that addressing key barriers such as language proficiency, qualification recognition, and access to professional training plays a pivotal role in enabling refugee women to achieve meaningful employment and social integration.

Language proficiency emerges as a critical factor impacting employment opportunities for Ukrainian refugee women. Women with high levels of Polish fluency are far more likely to secure positions in education that align with their qualifications, while those with limited proficiency are often relegated to low-skilled and less stable roles. This underscores the importance of accessible and targeted language training programs tailored specifically for educators, integrating both linguistic and pedagogical components to facilitate a smoother transition into the local education system.

The complex and time-consuming process of diploma recognition also significantly hinders the professional integration of refugee women. Many are forced to delay or forgo career opportunities in education due to bureaucratic challenges. Streamlining and simplifying these procedures, particularly for high-demand sectors such as education, is crucial. Collaborative efforts between Ukrainian and Polish educational authorities to establish mutual recognition frameworks can further expedite this process, reducing delays and enabling quicker workforce participation.

Professional retraining and adaptation programs prove to be vital in equipping refugee women with the skills necessary to navigate the Polish education system. However, these programs often lack accessibility and inclusivity, limiting their effectiveness. Expanding the availability of professional development courses and mentorship programs can bridge these gaps, providing refugee women with the resources and support needed to succeed. Mentorship, in particular, has the potential to build confidence and foster a sense of belonging, as experienced Polish educators guide refugees in adapting to local educational practices.

Psychological and social challenges also play a significant role in shaping the integration experiences of refugee women. The stress of displacement, coupled with family responsibilities, creates additional obstacles to professional growth. Holistic support systems, including childcare services, counseling, and community support groups, can mitigate these challenges, enabling women to focus on their careers and personal development.

The study confirms that effective integration strategies must be multifaceted and involve collaboration between government institutions, NGOs, and educational organizations. By implementing comprehensive integration programs that address the unique needs of refugee women, Poland can not only empower these individuals but

also benefit from their valuable contributions to the education sector. Moreover, the integration of skilled refugee women into the workforce can help alleviate labor shortages and foster a more inclusive and equitable society.

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Integration of Ukrainian women refugees into the education sector in Poland

Abstract

This article examines the integration of Ukrainian women refugees into the Polish education sector, focusing on educational and social programs supporting their professional adaptation. The study emphasizes the need for comprehensive support, including qualification recognition, language training, and professional retraining. Despite their education and experience, refugees face challenges such as language barriers and diploma recognition. Low-skilled jobs provide basic stability, but hinder full professional potential. Programs offering language preparation and career counseling are vital for faster adaptation. Poland's labor market, with its growing demand for qualified professionals, offers opportunities for refugees if integration barriers are addressed, benefiting both their adaptation and Poland's economy.

Keywords: integration, Ukrainian women refugees, education sector, professional adaptation, language training, labor market